

OXFORD

MAGAZINE

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Three weeks ago the Vice-Chancellor held her important termly 'Open Forum', with the Registrar and two P-V-Cs in support. The meeting was online; 800 had signed up and at least 300 attended. Last term's meeting had been 'in person' in the Examination Schools; fewer than 300 were present but a subsequent transcript means that what was said is on the record and available to all in the University. As the V-C now explained, it had been agreed that the format of meetings would alternate in this way. Questioners asked why all such meetings could not simply be in 'hybrid' mode – in person but also accessible on Zoom – but the V-C seemed, improbably, to say that this was beyond the University's capacities. "We don't have the technology", she said. We are informed that no transcript will be available for this term's meeting.

Around one hundred questions were raised in the 'chat'; twenty more had been pre-submitted. We found it surprising that most questioners opted to remain 'anonymous' and we wondered why. The range of themes was considerable: current Covid policy, blended working, the future of continuing education, disinvestment in fossil fuel companies, international students, funding of private halls, staff housing, apprenticeships, EJRA and pensions,

Causes of suspicion

solicitation of attitudes to EDI in job interviews. At one stage the V-C gave an explanation for the disappearance last year of the post of P-V-C (Equality), pointing out that it had never in fact been a post comparable to the other P-V-Cs with portfolios. She announced that funding had been obtained for a new fully established P-V-C post covering EDI – all of which would have come as breaking news to most of us.

Unsurprisingly, not all the the questions could be answered in the time available. The V-C rounded off the meeting by reminding us that from the very start of her term in office her greatest concern had been to correct public misinformation and misunderstandings about Oxford. In particular, she had sought to convince disadvantaged, but able, students that they could get into Oxford like anybody else.

But undoubtedly the most notable point in the meeting came when the V-C spoke out, with some passion, to say that staff had "no need to be so suspicious". She seemed to be wanting to reassure us that we had no reason to distrust our colleagues elsewhere in the University. As in her 'One Oxford' campaigning, she appealed for "unity" alongside pride in our institution.

Oxford Magazine publication arrangements

We are unable to publish the *Oxford Magazine* in print for the foreseeable future, as a result of COVID19-related working restrictions. Arrangements for archival copies will be made at a later date.

We will continue to publish online editions of the *Oxford Magazine* and send emails to our online subscribers. We will also send emails to our print subscribers, where we have an email address for them, so that they continue to receive the *Magazine* in an available format.

If you are a print subscriber and do not wish to receive such emails, please visit www.staffsubs.ox.ac.uk and cancel your subscription.

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...and much more

And yet grounds for suspicion were all too well illustrated by the meeting. The wealth of questions showed the extent to which staff wished for information in many areas of uncertainty. But it needed an occasion like this – where senior University administrative officers were accessible and able to exchange views directly with staff – for the answers to be provided. This frank and informative presentation by the V-C in itself pointed up the possible reasons for suspicion: it was a reminder of the rarity of such opportunities and of the extraordinary lack of information – and even secretiveness on the part of the administration – that normally prevails.

Vice-Chancellor's Q&As were an innovation brought in by Professor Richardson. Prior to that we depended for information about University policies on summaries of Council minutes, the *Gazette*, *Blueprint*, the Annual Oration and occasional Congregation meetings (and submitted Congregation questions). But during Professor Richardson's tenure much has changed for the worse, irrespective of the pandemic. Council minutes are made available months in arrears and are just as unrevealing as ever. More and more communication is purely digital. But the most undermining trend has been the way that internal communication has become indistinguishable from external. In the University's efforts to defend its image and reputation in the face of remorseless media attention the same public relations standards have been applied to the staff web pages.

Take just one, key, example of what has been happening. Just a few years ago it was possible for us to look up the membership of Council in the staff web pages and to be given brief biographical details. Now it is virtually impossible even to find out the names of our colleagues currently serving on our ruling administrative body – including those representing us as Congregation-elected members. Those in administration most familiar with the web appear to have no idea how user-unfriendly and limited the web resources are for the rest of us. As the average academic knows only too well, essential digital tools are constantly being changed ("upgraded") and web resources are ever harder to navigate. More and more is hidden behind SSO.

If there is cause for suspicion this surely is where to look for it; namely, failure of internal communication to keep all sections of the University well, and equally, informed. At the Open Forum the V-C seemed to acknowledge that our IT systems are in need of improvement. She announced that a new P-V-C (IT) post is being created. The problem is not just technical or logistical, but one of openness.

The need for dialogue and unity within the University is greater than ever and particularly at the moment when we seek the next Vice-Chancellor. What sort of person do we want? Will they be 'one of us'? Whether external or internal appointments, will they re-assert academic values above all else in the future running of the institution? Our democratic ethos is in question as evidenced by the moribund condition of Congregation. Its dysfunction was much discussed before Covid and it is largely explained by dysfunctional internal communication; if members of Congregation have not been informed about emerging policies in an adequate and timely fashion how can they engage with them?

Against this background the importance of *Oxford Magazine* is only increasing. It defines itself as "a forum for the free expression of opinion within the University". In an age when communication as well as decision-making is conducted through social media and email the need for the permanent record becomes all the more obvious. And as free speech and fair criticism are increasingly threatened by the uninhibited voicing of opinions that fracture collegiality the value of a forum that insists on civilised standards of discourse appropriate to a university becomes clearer. As co-editors we insist that our aim is to represent all reasonable points of view across the whole University. But we know that some of those working in the administration perceive the *Magazine* as targeting them unfairly. We can only publish what is submitted to us and, even after editorial moderation, we ourselves often disagree with the harsher critiques in our pages.

We urge one point; namely, that Oxford is fortunate – and unique among universities internationally – to have this beacon of free speech. In our attempts to achieve a more balanced representation of opinion and to supplement available information sources – as in the Q&A exchanges with senior University officers that we have periodically published – we have experienced defensiveness and even outright refusal to cooperate from senior administrators we have approached. This tells you everything, as they say.

The Prime Minister is currently testing the Nolan principles of standards in public life. Those same standards, of course, will apply to our next Vice-Chancellor. The Fifth Principle addresses openness; "Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing."

B.B., T.J.H

Remember that a wealth of information about the University has now been made available by the EJRA Review Group;
<https://staff.admin.ox.ac.uk/working-at-oxford/ejra#tab-3236066>

Why Aren't We Striking?

BEN BOLLIG

The recent all-staff communication from the VC struck a spring-like, optimistic note: normality is returning. What Professor Richardson omitted to mention is a wider educational context in which Oxford is something of an anomaly. Despite a re-ballot by UCU providing a mandate for industrial action – strikes and action short of a strike – in many other UK HE institutions, our university is not going on strike.

As *The Guardian* reported, at a national level, 76% of UCU members who voted were in favour of strikes, while 88% backed action short of a strike, on a turnout of 53% that passed the statutory minimum of 50% of membership required. Balloting took place at 68 universities, and 37 passed the statutory threshold for strike action. The universities voting to go on strike include Edinburgh, Belfast and Liverpool, as well as the Open University.¹

Across town, Oxford Brookes is going on strike. Cambridge is too. The full list of HE strike institutions is extensive, and can be found on the UCU's website.² In fact, Oxford is one of a very small number of major UK universities that isn't on strike. Those of us who follow social media will have seen our news feeds awash with enthusiasm for industrial action. Even in COVID times, carrying on as normal feels strange, guilty, even.

The recent email to members from UCU General Secretary, Jo Grady, announced:

"the most sustained and ambitious programme of industrial action the university sector has seen. It is also the most varied – [...] Coordinating with students, extending the action by calling it on a rolling regional basis and building towards a marking boycott are all ways of achieving that."

There are two aspects to the dispute – the USS pensions plans for increased contributions and significantly lowered benefits; and the "four fights" dispute on issues including the gender pay gap and casualization. No one working in Oxford is immune to the issues at play, and those earlier in their careers should pay particular attention: Oxford regularly ranks as the most unaffordable city in the UK; and the cuts to future pensions will make the eyes of even the most blasé water. The recent Staff Experience Survey (see: *Oxford Magazine*, No 439, 0th week, HT 2022) suggests that workload, pay, and stress are live issues here as much as they are elsewhere in the UK.

As the UCU notes:

"Since 2009, university staff pay has effectively been cut by nearly 20% in real terms, while staff are being asked to work harder and longer than ever before. The employers' own analysis highlights that women, black and minority ethnic, and disabled staff experience significant pay discrimination. Casual contracts remain entrenched, and 3,000 university staff were made redundant during the pandemic."³

On pensions, the UCU statement continues:

"since 2011, university staff's USS pension has effectively been

cut by [on average] £240,000. In the latest cycle [...] employers are proposing further cuts – amounting to 35% – to staff's guaranteed pension."

Raw numbers are only part of the issue for the UCU. They argue that HE workers are "at breaking point" over "insecure contracts; race, gender and disability pay gaps; and dangerously high workloads."⁴ The employers' organisation, the UCEA, has downplayed support for the strikes, accused the UCU of taking action that hurts students, and blames pension changes on the wider regulatory context.⁵ The NUS is backing the action, and has come up with a Valentine's Day themed support campaign.⁶

In the Oxford pensions rebalot, of the 1349 entitled to vote, 627 cast their votes, which is to say 46.48% of the eligible electorate, and below the 50% threshold required for action. In favour of strike action, a similar turnout, 80.19% (1 spoilt); in favour of action short of a strike, 92.63% (3 spoilt). Although UCU membership is low in Oxford as a percentage of total headcount, it is not a massive outlier in comparison to similar sized universities. Previous – and recent – rounds of industrial action, though, have been able to reach the required threshold, and there have been lively and very visible pickets, rallies, and "teach-ins", not to mention the social and other media attention. UCU membership is open to University and college employees; members include lecturers, post-doctoral research and other fixed-term staff, professors, readers, librarians, administrators, computing staff and postgraduates who teach.⁷ UCU representatives reported postal issues as a partial explanation for the ballot result.

David Chivall, President of the Oxford UCU committee, told the *Magazine*:

"The ballot process under the Trade Union Act is designed to set a really high threshold for unions to take industrial action. We narrowly missed the threshold in the autumn by fewer votes than the number of members who told us their ballots hadn't turned up due to the problems with the post. In the rebalot over Christmas we again missed the threshold by a similar number of votes."

Another possible explanation is that Oxford academics are less engaged than their counterparts elsewhere; the availability of alternative channels for democratic participation in the University (Council, Congregation) and in colleges (as Governing Body members) might be seen to obviate union activism. But in some cases – Congregation, for example – these channels are sclerotic, moribund, even. Are we just being complacent?

This complacency may well be linked to the sense that the Oxford brand gives all of us an automatic uplift, including the increasingly dubious idea that we are uniquely democratic. But there is a related problem of lack of information, with the result that most of us at the chalk-face have little idea what is going on in University policy. To give an example it has taken the EJRA 10-year review to collect and reveal masses of useful data about retirement

processes and policy, but this data is not otherwise available to us in the normal run of things. Even for those who know it exists it is difficult to find. Perhaps ironically, the lack of clear communication from the central University makes it harder to know what is really going on, and whether industrial action is appropriate – with resulting apathy towards both the national and local situation.

The college system shields many of us from the worst excesses of managerialism. But COVID and the accompanying increase in centralised power, in a Wellington Square emboldened by the short-term successes of pandemic crisis management, make this an increasingly fragile defence. Permanent postholders generally work in pleasant environments, with college perks, but no amount of elegant furnishing or subsidised sherry will make up for a pension that costs ever more and gives back ever less; or is any comfort to those many colleagues on short-term, hourly-paid contracts.

Joint-postholders find themselves in the strange situation of only being on strike in the University part of their employment, meaning in practice that tutorial teaching (often the bulk of one's weekly duties) continues regardless. This lends a certain unreality to strikes for some of us: spending time on the picket line, going to rallies, keeping an eye on the social media feeds, and then heading back to teach the usual tutorial stint.

There is another, rather awkward aspect, which per-

haps explains lower levels of engagement with both local democracy and union campaigns. Many people who work at Oxford have other sources of income aside from their University and/or college salaries – consultancy, spinout companies, or simply independent wealth. In various ways, the University encourages this situation, and a happy side-effect (for the University) may be that many colleagues see solutions to falling wages, increased workload, and insecure pensions in choices closer to home than union action or democratic participation. The eventual consequences for “One Oxford” could be highly damaging.

¹<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/nov/04/uk-university-staff-to-strike-over-cuts-to-pension-benefits>

²<https://www.ucu.org.uk/HE-dispute-institutions>

³<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/11896/Why-were-taking-action>

⁴<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/12076/Official-statistics-show-why-university-staff-are-taking-strike-action>

⁵<https://www.ucea.ac.uk/news-releases/27jan22/>

⁶<https://www.nus.org.uk/campaigns/new-vision-for-education/ucus-trikes2021>

⁷<https://oxforducu.org.uk/>

Toadland

after Kenneth Grahame

The world has seen great tricksters,
As history books have showed.
But none of that cry was half so fly
As slippery Mr Toad!

Those clever peeps at Oxbridge
Know most that can be known.
Not one of them knows the half of it
When it comes to Mr Toad.

The mugs sat down in the dark and wept,
Their tears in buckets flowed.
Who was it bluffed, ‘You’ll all be rich!’?
You’ve got it. Mr Toad.

The Brexit bus went Poop-Poop-Poop
Ignoring its overload.
Which of them steered it over a cliff?
The calamitous Mr Toad!

The public cheered when Covid
Seemed to reach the end of its road.
Was it Sky News that told them?
Nuts. It was Mr Toad.

The Queen came from her chapel;
Heavy the grief she showed.
At her regular diary meeting
She said, ‘Ixnay on Mr Toad!’

RIP BULKELEY

Rip Bulkeley is an Academic Visitor at Exeter College. ‘Toadland’ will be published in the anthology *A Fish Rots from the Head*, out soon from Culture Matters.

Mirror

Inexorable change:
the face that greets me is a stranger's,
rough and reddened,
the lids extended
to droop over eyes
pink-suffused, dull-irised.

A matter of making do:
mind keeps body moving
towards whatever target
the day offers, forgetting
(mostly) the ultimate end
about which there's no pretending.

I must dismantle now
without evasion or cowardice
the things of which I'm made:
opinions once paraded,
all that describes a man,
suitably abandoned –

or rather, accept this mess,
this labyrinth of guesswork
I once believed was me.
The riddle is intriguing.
Nothing could be more strange
than the future of this stranger.

Plaza Vieja, Havana

Gently the square floats this Sunday afternoon
on the lilt of music, the iron bell and the drums,
and a girl ten feet high crosses the cobbles
as if on chopsticks, her impossible legs
rippling in satin frills, orange and green.

Behind her march the trumpeter, the boy
with a tambourine, and the man playing *claves*,
paired hardwood sticks that hold the music together
as once they pegged the timbers of slave ships.
The boy holds out his tambourine for money.

A man runs balancing a square meter of cake
thick with blue and white icing for someone's birthday,
and the Venezuelan football team in red shirts
applaud as the girl strides between their tables
and spins, wriggling her tight orange satin.

Boys on skateboards circle the central fountain
and brindled dogs pour themselves into pools of shadow.
Round a corner the music stops with a hard echo.
The dancer sinks to the pavement and unbinds
the padding, bunched around her legs like pillows

where the metal stilts and sweat are giving her blisters.
The trumpeter throws back his head and lips
a blue plastic bottle, closing his eyes,
feeling the music flow back to its source,
to a long darkness, to an echo of water.

Clothes

Sometimes your clothes might speak.
Tonight, remember, the subtle shock

at seeing how shirt and trousers lay
where you had dropped them carelessly,

their long chance folds so combed and creased
as for a moment to suggest

quick striations of an urgent
flow, say of a swollen current

dragging them from the body, a river's
indecent sucking that uncovers

every last thing. As your friend's partner was found
naked, six miles down river, drowned

in the autumn flood, dragged through her car window
to float, pale and tranquil, below

the bridge where her car fetched up. You knew
tonight something taking you,

and fast. Though it was with calm
you registered the impersonal form

of the emptied garments: as the mind
might look back at the body once drowned

with neither anxiety nor elation,
seeing it swept to an unknown destination.

Starlings

The small murmur rises over Flixton –
rises and falls and rises, fluent
pulsations of a subtle intangible heart
opening, closing, a living
watermark on the sky.
This is the resurrection of a race of martyrs:
once town councils across England
poisoned, electrocuted, sterilised the flocks
because their droppings fertilised the earth.
Now, diminished but undaunted, they return,
a shimmering music across the air,
a song of movement. And when they settle
to gabble companionably in a tree
with voices we once heard as cacophony,
now we hear the sound of life, telling us
we might just be offered a second chance.

GREVEL LINDOP

Grevel Lindop has seven collections of poems from Carcanet Press, most recently *Playing With Fire* and *Luna Park*. Prose books include *A Literary Guide to the Lake District*, *Travels on the Dance Floor*, and *Charles Williams: The Third Inkling*. He lives in Manchester, where he was formerly a Professor of English at the Victoria University.

EJRA – A view from “Upstairs”

DENIS NOBLE

I moved “upstairs” nearly two decades ago when I officially retired in 2004. I can therefore view the EJRA issue without the worrying concerns of dwindling pensions and insecure employment. In effect, I have been my own employer – almost like the “gentlemen academics” of earlier centuries, the Darwins, the Maxwells, and the Faradays. And that provides the clue to why I think it is important for universities to cultivate and encourage those who wish to work in retirement. They constitute a small force for creative endeavour, *independent of funding agencies*.

That is important since, in at least some fields of research, dependence on funding agencies can be counter-productive. We all know the treadmill process. No sooner is one grant secured than we need to plan strategically for the next one.

When I first came to Oxford nearly 60 years ago the treadmill hardly even existed. My department gave me “welcome” setting-up money. Rhodes and Marshall Scholars arrived to work with me. A research team rapidly built up with no additional funding. The 1960s and 1970s were the last such decades in British university history. By the 1980s the funding treadmill became the norm.

I wanted though to keep some element of freedom to follow wherever the research might lead, so I always put aside around 10% of funding for the “way-out” ideas. It was fortunate that I did. One of our discoveries was shocking. We found that a protein channel that was very important in heart rhythm could be completely removed with only a modest slowing of rhythm. That discovery later became the basis of a successful medication. The discovery was sufficiently surprising that I wrote it all up in a review entitled “*The Surprising Heart*”.

Identifying a new medication is often an unexpected bonus in medical research. That eventually won a major international prize for the key researcher making the discovery. But it had an even deeper significance for me. At around the same time, other researchers showed that a “clock” gene in mice could be knocked out without affecting daily rhythm. In a micro-organism, yeast, as many as 80% of knock-outs had little or no effect. The conclusion is obvious: crucial life-dependent processes are well backed-up with fail-safe mechanisms so that life continues even when normally important components are deleted. The question forced itself forwards: what does this mean for gene-centric interpretations of living organisms and their evolution?

I was ready therefore when I retired to make a decision that surprised many of my colleagues, to leave heart research to others and change the focus of my work. I started writing a book, *The Music of Life: Biology beyond the Genome*, published by OUP in 2006. It spelt out what was misleading in gene-centric theories. It could hardly have been a worse time in which to do so, since the gene-centric view was at the height of its popularity. Just 5 years earlier the first full sequencing of the human genome was announced to spectacular fanfares from both sides of the

Atlantic. The era of genomics had well and truly begun, bolstered by promises that within a decade the major illnesses of humanity, diabetes, cancer, mental disorders and much else would yield to gene-centric solutions. If that was correct, what I was planning to do was irrelevant.

Yet, what I and others were finding was leading to precisely the opposite expectation, which is that the associations between genes, health and disease states would be misleading. That expectation has been fully borne-out by the genomics research of the last 2 decades. Most association levels are low. So much so that many are now concluding that, in effect, all genes are related in some way or other to all disease states. The future for interpreting these results will now depend on linking them to physiological understanding of the extremely complex regulatory processes in living organisms. That will take time, and certainly much more than an optimistic decade or two.

I could not help also seeing that the implications for gene-centric theories of evolution are even more fundamental. It is organisms that live or die. What matters in most cases are those regulatory networks, not specific genes. That opens up a can of worms. Nearly all the main principles of Evolutionary Biology need revisiting. That is what my books explain. But the response was far from encouraging. For 10 years between 2006 and 2016 I was the target of sustained on-line abuse for daring to challenge orthodox evolutionary biology. I won't pretend that didn't hurt, but at the least it could not upset my funding because I didn't need any. That abuse reached a crisis level when in 2016 I organised a joint Discussion Meeting between The Royal Society and The British Academy on “*New Trends in Evolutionary Biology*”. As soon as the meeting was publicised for people to register, a large protest was received by the Royal Society requesting the meeting to be withdrawn or at least not held at The Royal Society. I was accused of shaming the Society since:

“it is hardly an exaggeration to say that the situation is similar to the Society allowing advocates of homeopathy to organize a meeting on medical research.”

Having never worked on anything remotely connected with homeopathy, this was an absurd claim. But I and my co-organisers stood firm, the meeting went ahead, was a sell-out, and resulted in a perfectly respectable publication in the Society's journals.

Even this personal history is not yet the main point of this article. People will eventually be able to judge whether what I did was wise or a dead-end. The important point is that I was free to try the ideas out, and to pursue the research wherever it might lead. That was the kind of risk that the “gentlemen scientists” of previous centuries could afford to take. Charles Darwin, no less, actually spent the last 20 years of his life working with a physiologist, George Romanes, to discover the mechanisms of transmission of acquired characteristics, a heresy

in today's orthodoxy.

I shall never regret having switched the focus of my work 2 decades ago. I have been privileged to be able to pursue what I wanted to do without fear or favour. That alone justifies the need for universities to recognise the value of those who can afford to pursue way-out ideas freely. There aren't that many of us who wish and have the resources to do so. Way-out ideas are sometimes the lifelines of the future.

How to initiate Congregation actions

How to trigger a debate or discussion in Congregation

It is open to any 20 or more members of Congregation to propose a resolution or topic for discussion at a meeting of Congregation; requests must be made in writing to the Registrar not later than noon on the 22nd day before the relevant meeting. Any 2 or more members of Congregation can submit an amendment to, or announce an intention to vote against, a resolution or a legislative proposal (*i.e.* a proposal to amend the statutes). Notice must be given to the Registrar (in writing) not later than noon on the 8th day before the meeting.

Questions and replies

Any 2 or more members of Congregation may ask a question in Congregation about any matter concerning the policy or the administration of the University. Requests must be submitted to the Registrar (in writing) not later than noon on the 18th day before the Congregation meeting at which it is to be asked. The question and the reply (drafted by Council) will be published in *Gazette* in the week prior to the relevant meeting. The answer is also formally read out at the meeting. Supplementary questions are allowed.

Postal votes

Attendance at meetings of Congregation tends to be low. Postal voting can potentially allow opinion to be easily accessed more widely across Congregation membership. Congregation can trigger a postal vote after a debate (but not after a discussion or a question and reply where no vote is taken). 25 or more members of Congregation have to be present ("on the floor") at the relevant debate. The request must be made by 4pm on the 6th day after the debate, signed by 50 members of Congregation, in writing to the Registrar. Council can also decide to hold a postal ballot, by the same deadline.

Flysheets

To generate a flysheet for publication with the *Gazette*, the camera-ready copy (2 sides maximum) should be submitted with at least 10 signatures on an indemnity form (obtainable from the Registrar) by 10am on the Monday in the week in which publication is desired.

Regulations governing the conduct of business in Congregation can be found at: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/529-122.shtml>

Items placed on the agenda for Congregation are published in the *Gazette*.

The Congregation website is at: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/councilsec/governance/congregation.

Advice on Congregation procedures is available from the Council Secretariat on request (email: congregation.meeting@admin.ox.ac.uk).

Notes from Ivory Flats

ROBERT FOLEY

The last taboo

In academic life – ideally – there should be few if any taboos. If academic freedom means anything, it is a licence to think out loud. Sometimes that may of course bring down unhappy consequences on the person doing the thinking out loud, so in practice academic freedom is hemmed in on one side by the sensitivity of the receiver and the courage – or stupidity – of the thinker. As issues to do with race and other aspects of diversity have come to the fore, these fences have perhaps shifted. There is, though, one taboo that a lecturer breaks at their own peril.

Imagine (well, start by imagining it is not lockdown, Covid-country, or strike time) that you go into the staff-room, post-room, lunch, or a colleague's office, and he or she asks you how you are.

"Absolutely fantastic", you reply. "I can't wait to charge through my emails – always educational and informative – and then I have a couple of lectures – my favourite subject and such great students – before I look over the latest REF submissions (such clever colleagues we have). Pigs in clover fails to catch the perfection of my day".

Wrong, wrong, wrong! You have just made an error, a cultural gaffe of enormous magnitude. You have broken the ultimate tribal taboo of academia – do not be uncomplaining about your lot. In the less benign days of Druids and woad you would have ended up as a set of choice cuts on the altar at Stonehenge. You would now, though, be first in line when volunteers for redundancy are being tracked down.

As every reader of this will know, the correct answer to anyone asking how you are is:

"Oh God, you have no idea. My inbox is swamped with illiterate instructions from on high, all wanting a response by yesterday. My eleven o'clock lecture isn't ready, the Powerpoint froze and ate 10 slides, I haven't read the masters' students' coursework, and this afternoon I have to listen to Bloggs droning on about how awful the REF submission is."

Unlike the earlier answer, this one is the perfect prompt for a full and fascinating conversation, and the beginning of that key but untutored academic skill – the competitive moan.

"Yes, that does sound bad, but you don't know the half of it. My inbox was so full my email shut down, I haven't a clue what I am supposed to be lecturing about at ten, and there's an endless stream of students waiting to see me. Not to mention my paper has come back with major revisions, and Reviewer 2 is clearly moronic."

Once started, this exchange becomes its own renewable energy source.

Among the indigenous communities of the Pacific coast of the US and Canada there is a custom known as potlatch.

This is a competitive gift-giving feast, where the winner is the one who gives the most away – even at the cost of complete penury. In the Ivory Flats, we have competitive moaning. The winner is the person who has the most to complain about. Actually, that is not quite true. The winner is person who complains best. This will occasionally reflect genuine hardship, overwork and deprivation, but to be honest, there is a skill in the game that only bears a loose relationship to the pecking order of suffering. Some people are just good at it. Indeed, as we get trained for everything else these days, we should probably have courses devoted to it.

There are two puzzles about this local cultural tradition. One is that I am not sure when it began. I don't recall it being a big thing in the 1970s when I started lecturing, just the odd minor moan, although no doubt there were early specialists. I did have one colleague who could sigh for England. His timing was perfect – if somebody entered the Departmental office, he could ensure that his soft, long, low sigh was not drowned by the door closing. If you walked past his office, the sigh came exactly as you passed the open door. Many a neophyte made the mistake of stopping and asking what was wrong.

But he was an outlier, an evolutionarily precocious animal, a mammal-like reptile lurking in the Palaeozoic. For the most part we seemed as cheerful as could be expected. More precisely, moans were specific, targeted, not generic. A particular lecture, not the whole livelihood of teaching; a particular student, not the entire student body in this and any other university, at this time or any other time, a singularly unhelpful reviewer, not the entire peer review system. It is hard to pinpoint when the transition took place, and it is probably not so much a point in time as a response to the changing conditions in which we work – as we moved out of the Ivory Tower and into the Ivory Flats. If I was to pick on one thing, it would be the growth of email, removing the camouflage that allowed us to shelter safely from institutional predators, and get on with our work, but it is difficult to disentangle this from the relentless growth of a central administration with few inhibitions and less accountability.

The other puzzle is why this has become the central cultural tradition, as much a part of being an academic as speaking French is to being French. That it has become so pervasive is probably easily understandable, an outcome of the normal processes of cultural evolution. In learning the skills of the culture, to do well and rise up, one is well-advised to imitate the behaviours that are most common, or failing that, the behaviours of those with the highest status. Either way, once moaning becomes common, only a fool will not moan. To use one of my favourite evolutionary models, John Maynard Smith's 'evolutionarily stable strategy', it is unavoidable by a strategy with a higher payoff. In a universe of complainers, the happy rat is a loser.

More difficult to understand than the spread is the origin. It is unlikely to be the result of one particularly

charismatic complainer, the ‘moaner zero’ in modern panademic terminology. More probable is that the conditions in which we work have changed. I have already referred to emails, usually at the top of most people’s list of curses of modern academic life. Emails destroy planning. They are the great disruptor. No matter what one sets out to do, only the most focused of us (not me) is not side-tracked by the ping, and so the day unravels like a badly knitted jumper. But emails – there is so much more to say on those – are not unique to universities, so cannot be more than the collateral damager.

Another possible culprit is the sheer increase in workload. What better reason is there to complain than that we are working too hard, too many hours. That is certainly true – I look back at my younger years as if they were leisurely Edwardian summers, compared to the frantic pace today. But while academics work hard and long hours most do more than 50 hours a week, and Mary Beard recently said she worked 100 hours – something I can well believe. But young bankers and city folk are regularly doing 120 or more (mind you, their burn out rate is phenomenal), and they probably complain less, either because they are too busy counting the money, or because it would be seen as a sign of weakness, not being able to cut it in the fat cat race.

I think we have to look at the tensions that lie within academic life these days. Those tensions are what makes us unable either to rise up in full blown strikes and revolt, nor happily accept our lot. Moaning is the resolution to those tensions.

Two ways in which we are pulled in different directions come to mind. The first is teaching and research. I think, back in the days when we lived in Ivory Towers, there was a general acceptance that teaching, lecturing, was a central part of the role, rewarding in itself, and not that overwhelming. Research was equally important, and usually why people entered the career. But everyone found their own balance, with some enjoying and focusing more on teaching, others research, and the balance could shift back and forwards across a career. But there has been a change in this balance. Leaving aside that teaching has become time-consuming (finding the perfect picture of a baby gorilla for one Powerpoint can take hours!), the relative status of the two has changed. The REF, and Universities’ obsession with grant income, has elevated research as ‘the activity’, the basis for respect, reputation and promotion. This may have been inevitable, and indeed what most of us who are ‘research active’ would like, but the unintended consequence is the resentment of time spent teaching. Lecturing, tutoring, and student support become, in our heads, the things that are keeping us from that Nobel prize. Given the increasing amount of work time now devoted to all of these, and the way in which research becomes squeezed into the margins of the working day and year, what was previously a more balanced situation has become a major stressor. Moaning – “I have another ten lectures this week and that grant deadline is approaching faster than a speeding bullet” – is the only solution, as, in practice, not much else can be done. We work in this extraordinary environment where the only thing that counts – research – is not scheduled. Imagine being a surgeon where no theatre time is scheduled, just meetings and training. Finding time to make a few incisions would just have to be squeezed into evenings and weekends. That is modern university life.

The second tension lies in the ambiguity of academic employment. In Flann O’Brien’s *The Third Policeman*, the people of the village spend so long riding their bicycles that they exchange molecules with them, so that the bicycle takes on human characteristics, and the humans bike ones. A person can have a slow puncture, and a bike can have a personality. Working in a university for a long time also results in an exchange of molecules, so that where you stop and the university starts become horrendously blurred. We are not really simple employees earning a wage as we are so invested in our institutions, and our lives and egos are locked into those institutions. At the sadder end there are those, despite the complete change in the nature of the institution, who have stayed in love with the process of research and teaching. To change would be like accepting the end of the affair. The solution, of course, is to moan.

“It’s ridiculous, they’ve put me on the Working After Hours Safety Committee, but what can I do.... That’s another late nighter I shall have finishing my grant application”.

So moaning is the adaptive solution, the academic safety valve, where we cannot rise up and revolt against our lot, because we think it would be revolting against ourselves, hurting our colleagues and friends and students. As I said in my last piece, the growing distinction between ‘The University’ and the academics will erode that sense of community, and perhaps moaning will be replaced by a different adaptive solution. Until then, it is much easier just to ratchet up the potlatch of complaints.

“I’ll see your 50 hours of lectures and three committees and raise you”

Moaning is, paradoxically, the offspring of impotence.

Can They Learn from the Train of Events? - Part II

PETER OPPENHEIMER

The first part of this article (see the previous *Oxford Magazine*, No. 439) recalled the political debates which took place in the 1980's and much of the 1990's regarding growth, financing and governance of Britain's university sector. Pointers at the time to future developments frequently concerned limits on Exchequer financing out of general taxation, and a corresponding need for greater emphasis on private sources. Discussions of university governance were simplistic. There was unthinking acceptance of the view that cost-effectiveness and value-for-money called for business-style decision-taking by Boards of Directors under Chief Executive Vice-Chancellors.

There were also moves towards greater flexibility, or variety, in the academic labour market. The 1988 Education Reform Act, though predominantly focussed on schools, authorised university governing bodies to approve the dismissal of permanent ("tenured") academic staff on grounds of redundancy (i.e. without findings of personal misconduct or dereliction of duty). Nowadays a growing fraction of academic employment contracts are qualified in some way, whether "teach-only", linked to specific research projects or part-time.

The relevance of these miscellaneous developments to Oxford was patchy, for several reasons. One was Oxford's collegiate character, almost all the colleges being legally autonomous entities (among other things, a big advantage for private fund-raising.) Another was the sovereign status of its academic assembly, Congregation. Consistent with these two elements was the fact that the twin executive bodies at the centre of the University – Hebdomadal Council and the General Board of the Faculties – comprised members appointed overwhelmingly from the periphery or from the academic rank-and-file, in the latter case nominated by faculty boards. This was a structure of governance not merely democratic in its mode of appointment, but conducive to identifying institution-wide consensus, and to assuaging controversy, on any individual governance topic day by day. Consensus is not, of course, the same as cost-effectiveness. But the two are likely to go in step.

By the same token, the governance disaster under which Oxford has laboured since the turn of the century has been essentially self-inflicted. Its blueprint was the report in 1998 of the North Commission, specific to Oxford and focussing narrowly on governance, and not the virtually simultaneous survey from the Dearing Committee, which was a wide-ranging twenty-year manifesto for the sector at large. Those twenty years have now elapsed. And Oxford can no longer plead (if it ever could) that it needs more time to make its newly misbegotten governance arrangements work satisfactorily. They are, in fact, material for a case-study on how to destroy an established system which had been not only democratic but notably

cost-effective, and replace it with one which is not only authoritarian but conspicuously wasteful of resources as well as negligent of its primary duty to academic standards.

At the core of the North reforms was the establishment of a ruling clique/cabinet/politburo – call it what you will – headed by a chief executive appointed for up to seven years. The chief executive is labelled Vice-Chancellor, misleadingly so, since the position bears little resemblance to the type of non-executive chairmanship formed by that office in earlier centuries. The other dozen or so politburo members are mostly either Pro-Vice-Chancellors "with Portfolio" or else Heads of one of the four Divisions between which the bulk of the University's activities is currently distributed (see further comment below). All these individuals are chosen, in whole or in part, at the Vice-Chancellor's discretion.

Hand in hand with creation of the politburo went abolition of Hebdomadal Council and the General Board, and their replacement by a single University Council (plus subordinate committees). The latter is basically dysfunctional. Its meetings are infrequent (twice per term, with some scope for variation), its agendas overloaded and its deliberations dominated by the self-same politburo, for which it acts as a rubber stamp. Its make-up includes a sizable element of pseudo-democracy, in the form of individuals elected from various constituencies of University staff after having advanced their own candidatures. Apart from other objections, such as the fact that "representation" of staff constituencies thereby achieved is wholly illusory, this disregards the golden rule that persons ambitious to be recruited to a University's governing apparatus are precisely the ones to keep at bay. A final element on Council is the "lay" members, a handful of outside business or financial executives, one of whose functions is to endorse the excessive remuneration of the Vice-Chancellor ("Nothing like as large as that of top footballers", was the current incumbent's comment) and other senior office-holders.

The ineffectual nature of Council is not a matter of controversy. It is freely admitted among its own membership. Those elected as staff representatives have jointly issued vain appeals to their "constituents" to contact them with any matters of concern. And Council as a whole is dragged off every few years to a self-assessment away-day for considering how to improve its operation. Measures agreed in all seriousness have been a change in seating arrangements, and the addition of an extra lay member (or possibly two). Should one laugh or cry? For fuller comment on these particular aspects, see Peter Oppenheimer, "Facing up to Uncomfortable Facts, or, the Rot from the Top", *Oxford Magazine*, No. 409, *Fifth Week, Trinity Term*, 2019.

The expulsion of academic grass-roots from Oxford's governance was reinforced by the assignment of every Oxford faculty to one of the aforementioned "Divisions" (aptly so designated), all of whose Heads are politburo members. This structure rules out, at a stroke, two things. One is communication direct from faculties to the politburo as a whole, by-passing the Divisional filter. The other is any disposition of Division Heads to compromise on their sectional objectives in the interests of University-wide balance or accommodation. The combined result is to promote partial information and distorted or confrontational decision-taking at the top.

There are two ironies in all this. (i) The introduction of Divisions was itself the result of disproportionate attention unwisely paid by the North Commission to the special case of Clinical Medicine, which arguably does warrant an exceptional, semi-detached status because of its size, its integration with the United Oxford Hospitals and the fact that it attracts two-thirds of the University's entire research revenue. Elsewhere, (ii) the politburo is fond of boasting about Oxford's modish commitment to "interdisciplinary" research. What about paying regard to interdisciplinary governance, arguably of far greater importance and until 1999 a distinguishing feature of Oxford, the University as well as its colleges?

As noted above, the democratic nature of Hebdomadal Council and the General Board was in harmony with the fact that the University's sovereign authority rests ultimately with its general assembly of Congregation – where decisions of the two executive bodies could in the last resort be disputed or overturned by grass-roots opinion, and to which the executive bodies themselves naturally turned when a major issue of principle or practice was at stake. In the mid-1990s membership of Congregation was extended to University administrators in senior grades. This reflected their growing importance in the search for funding – not only donations but also research grant applications – and in other areas such as the admissions process for graduates. Nonetheless, admitting them to Congregation was in retrospect a mistake. The conduct of the post-North politburo has made crystal clear that in its eyes the sovereign status of Congregation – indeed, the very existence of Congregation – is an irritating anomaly, a residual obstacle to its unfettered control of University business, and should be terminated. The conduct in question is mainly to withhold from the academic community information about significant developments until the latter are effectively a *fait accompli*, and Congregation approval a rubber-stamp operation, exactly as with the University Council. A particularly glaring instance was the establishment of Parks/Reuben College, and the associated allocation of resources, beginning in December 2018. But when a vote in Congregation becomes unavoidable, the politburo now has significant scope to pack the meeting with compliant staff from central offices.

This brings us to the other half of the story. The eclipse of democracy as outlined above, far from enhancing cost-effectiveness, has brought a tide of profligacy and mismanagement, variously associated with self-interested behaviour by the central administration. Previously there had been institutional barriers to such behaviour. Central administrative activity had to be justified by reference to agreed academic requirements. Then came the post-North regime, and the institutional barriers vanished. The resulting damage to the University over the ensuing

20 years has been complex, multi-stage and only to some extent quantifiable. What follows is my attempt to summarize the character of this damage.

At the outset we have simple overmanning: the emergence and existence of a crowd of superfluous administrators. What is their annual cost (including office accommodation)? And – stage two – how is the money found and with what further consequences? At stage three one must look at the central administration as a unit. Apart from its own excessive size, to what extent do its activities (a) involve further questionable use of University resources; (b) duplicate or interfere with the responsibilities of colleges or faculties; or (c) impinge in questionable fashion on the time-allocation or the professional morale of academic personnel? Finally, stage four, one must consider inactivity or neglect: what damage has Wellington Square caused by not acting when it should have acted?

Begin with stage one. In 1999, the last year of the democratic regime, central administrative personnel numbered a little over 600. I should emphasise that the term "administrative" is used in its strict sense: it does not include central non-administrative units, such as the Careers Service, the Counselling Service or Oxford Innovation (the latter, formerly ISIS Innovation, promoting spin-off companies). By 2008 the figure had risen from 600 to over 1,000. A decade later it was around 1,850 – roughly one central administrator to every three academic employees in the University. The superfluous portion may reasonably be put in the region of 850, with an annual cost of around £40 million. It is widely spread. The biggest single component is surely down to HR and also IT Services, whose 435 staff include some 200 people switched a few years earlier from working as an academic department into central administration. A significant element comes from the combined secretariats of the four Divisions, where staff numbers tend to increase as proof of their respective vigour in defending parochial interests. Analogous, Parkinson's-Law motives are at work in major sections such as Finance or Estates.

Where is the £40 million-a-year found? In the first instance Wellington Square just helps itself to a bigger slice of University revenue, recognising no overall constraint on its own budget nor duty to consult Congregation. There was actually a period along the way (in 2008-9) when the University ran an overall deficit. Some academic departments or sub-departments deemed under the University's accounting algorithm for teaching and research (JRAM - Joint Resource Allocation Method) to be over-spending were ordered to retrench. Nobody dared suggest that perhaps Wellington Square should obey its own instruction.

The only way of promptly recouping revenue on that (£40 million) scale was to admit more fee-paying graduate students – roughly five students per each central administrator, allowing thereby for some additional academic manpower to teach or supervise the students in question. Hence the greater part of the 140% increase in graduate student numbers, from (roughly) 5,000 to 12,000, in the first two decades of the century. With, of course, corresponding additional pressures on Oxford housing and on its environment. The rise in graduate student numbers was also very unevenly spread, with disproportionate concentration on faculties in the Social Studies Division, now accounting for one-quarter of all postgraduate students at Oxford. In other words, Insistence on Altering

the Size and Shape of the Central Administration – along with Indifference to the Size and Shape of the University.

It is appropriate to mention here, before turning to stage three, an instructive aspect of “Shape”, otherwise belonging under stage four as a symptom of central inaction. There have been justified complaints from the grass roots at the University’s failure adequately to enlarge the undergraduate intake for Computing Studies. The combined undergraduate population being subject to an overall ceiling, such enlargement must involve trimming the totality of places for other subjects. This has led some people to describe the issue as a “College problem”. It is nothing of the kind. It is precisely a central governance problem – which the General Board together with Hebdomadal Council (and possibly the Conference of Colleges) would long ago have resolved.

Proceeding now to stage three, one encounters the malign influence of the politburo at every turn. As to category (a), sub-optimal application of the University’s resources, the most blatant item under this head, deplored by more than one set of Proctors in their departing Oration, is excessive ‘prestige’ building. Worse still (though less readily measurable) is the associated filling up of precious real estate, particularly in central Oxford, where vacant acreage would be far better held in trust for future generations. Not one of the new buildings in the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter has been convincingly justified on academic grounds. This applies with special force to the forthcoming Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities – and would do so even if plans for that building had not assigned large parts of it to low-priority “performance spaces” aimed at the tourist trade. Nowhere do the humanities require extravagant centralised accommodation, least of all in collegiate Oxford. A moment’s glance at relevant statistics shows that the first need of Oxford’s humanities faculties is for more student scholarships and bursaries at both undergraduate and graduate level.

A fuller discussion of Oxford student finance, and the University’s unthinking alignment with UK government ordinances on the subject, must await another occasion. Meanwhile the politburo endeavours, by way of a two-pronged attack under headings (b) and (c), to override or belittle the role of Oxford colleges in particular. Under (b) it looks to interfere in areas of college responsibility for student progress and well-being. Its publicity material for Oxford on the web barely mentions colleges and minimizes the role of tutorials, failing notably to point out that their key function is not to offer a kind of mystic communion with great minds, but rather to make pupils work a lot harder than they otherwise would.

Finally, stage four. What other significant duties have the central administration brushed aside? One example is failure to ensure the ethical acceptability of donations solicited or recently received – even while boasting that the University is pioneering research into the ethics of AI (artificial intelligence). The so-called independent committee for monitoring donations has been a hollow pretence. Striking testimony is the University’s silence, and refusal to make amends in any way, on the millions received from the Sackler family/Purdue Pharma, generators of America’s horrifying opioid epidemic (See: Patrick Radden Keefe, *Empire of Pain* [Picador, 2021].)

Arguably much more serious is the collapse of Oxford’s degree standards, above all in the case of undergraduate Finals. It is largely a by-product of the performance

management of academics, together with other forms of trespassing on academic terrain by the bureaucracy. The ill-conceived Strategic Plan for 2018-23 included a statement that “methods of assessment” were to be modified so as to lessen discrimination – between more and less able students, obviously. The central administration also advises candidates to seek special dispensation, should they feel at all mentally stressed or otherwise put upon by the prospect of writing three-hour papers. Covid has given fresh impetus to the slide by occasioning the introduction of “open-book” exams, i.e. copying. But the pass had been sold long before. One wonders for how much longer the University can remain in denial on the subject.

In conclusion, Lord Patten and his Nominating Committee must surely realise that it will be no service to the University to appoint a fourth successive Vice-Chancellor (not counting Colin Lucas as “bridging” incumbent in 2000) of the type contemplated by the North Commission. Rather, they should acknowledge the harm that has demonstrably befallen Oxford’s governance as a result of acceding to the Commission’s follies, and do what they can to launch a process of recovery.

That ‘Oxbridge Crown’

G. R. EVANS

On 3 February *Times Higher Education* published a ‘feature’ with the title ‘Heavy lies the Oxbridge crown’,⁸ exploring some of the peculiar difficulties faced by the Vice-Chancellors of Oxford and Cambridge. With appointments to both Offices in process at the moment the article suggests that these ‘star jobs’ may not be as ‘alluring’ as the world imagines.

This came in a week when ‘town halls’ were being held by Cambridge’s Advisory Committee in the course of an ‘open consultation’. The Committee is appointed under the Statutes⁹ to do the preliminary work of advising the Council about the nomination of a successor to Stephen Toope, who has chosen to resign two years before his full seven year term would be up. As in Oxford, the nomination must be approved by the University’s sovereign body, in Cambridge by a Grace of the Regent House.

A quarter of a century ago their Vice-Chancellors came from within, were usually Heads of House, served a few years part-time and returned full-time to their colleges afterwards. They therefore entered Office with a full understanding of both colleges and University and tended to be regarded as ‘one of us’. The change to the present full-time seven-year Vice-Chancellorships came in Cambridge in 1992, on the recommendation of the Wass Syndicate¹. In Oxford it followed the *Report of the North Commission*, with the first such appointment that of John Hood, from 2004.

This has transformed the process of appointing to the Office because the search now looks outside the University. It also creates a need to explain fully and realistically both to the head-hunters appointed to assist with identifying possible candidates and to the candidates themselves what the job involves and why it is not like any other Vice-Chancellorship.

During Michaelmas Term the Cambridge Advisory Committee held informal discussions ‘about priorities for the next VC and key attributes we seek in potential candidates’, as it explains in the slides it used in introducing the ‘town hall’ meetings. The open consultation was to focus on these. They included ‘ensuring’ (research and teaching ‘excellence at the highest global standard’) and ‘strengthening’ of ‘the university’s finances’ and ‘increase philanthropic income’). More controversially appeared ‘leading’ of ‘change management’ and ‘the prioritization of major initiatives’, neither of which has been approved by the Regent House as a task in hand. The ‘attributes’ included ‘proven leadership in a comparable organisation’ (which might seem to limit candidates to those from posts in Oxford), ‘strength of purpose’ and willingness ‘to make and implement tough decisions’, puzzlingly coupled with ‘a consensual style’.

There was no suggestion of any need to alert candidates to the University’s system of governance. This approach may expose the eventual appointee to a shock. On 1 December 2017 the *Cambridge Alumni Magazine* carried an

interview with Cambridge’s then still-new Vice-Chancellor Stephen Toope.¹⁰ The first he had known about the vacancy was ‘when a headhunter contacted him’:

“I didn’t even know they were looking,” said Professor Toope, but the call took him straight back to his days doing a PhD at Trinity College.’

He confessed, ‘coming back, I was gobsmacked at the evolution of Cambridge and changes to everything it seemed to embody back then’.

These are certainly like no other Vice-Chancellorships in the UK. Everywhere but Oxford and Cambridge the governing body is made up of a couple of dozen mainly external members, with an external Chair. It meets a few times a year and chiefly considers ‘key performance indicators’. The Vice-Chancellor attends as the University’s Chief Executive and together with the Chair and the Clerk (commonly the Registrar) decides in practice what matters and what documents come to the governing body for its consideration. By contrast the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford or Cambridge is faced with sovereign bodies in which democracies of thousands can initiate business, demand more information and always have the last word.

* * *

In Oxford John Hood’s governance-change attempt was argued for with a claim that Oxford might lose funding if it did not adjust its governance to match the ‘sector norm’ more closely. However, with the dissolution of the Higher Education Funding Council for England which allocated public funding to eligible universities, the requirement to comply with its Financial Memorandum has disappeared,¹¹ and with it the expectation that the University will ‘comply’ with the norms or ‘explain’ its different governance each year. The Office for Students’ Regulatory Framework contains instead as Condition E2 a less prescriptive set of expectations, allowing for variation among institutions.¹²

The Chairs of other universities form a Committee of University Chairs. This includes neither Oxford nor Cambridge because their governing bodies have no Chairs.¹³ The CUC has produced a series of iterations of a *Higher Education Code of Governance*, the most recent in 2020,¹⁴ and an *Illustrative Practice Note on Recruiting a Vice-Chancellor* (2017).¹⁵ This last takes it as fundamental that the Vice-Chancellor is the Chief Executive.¹⁶

That Cambridge’s Vice-Chancellor is not its Chief Executive is not for want of trying on the part of Alec Broers, its second full-time Vice-Chancellor, from 1997-2004. In his second annual Address in October 1998 he expressed annoyance that ‘Cambridge’s governance is more open to active intervention by its staff at every level than probably any other comparable institution in the world’.¹⁷ He spoke of:

*'the assumption that gowned figures, solemnly meeting in conclave in the Senate-House can realistically govern a great, complex, and widely dispersed institution, having read and inwardly digested the convoluted prose of successive Reports.... Is it not now time for us to consider our machinery of governance?' he asked.*¹⁸

The opportunity came with the dramatic collapse on his watch of the University's new accounting system (CAPSA), followed by Michael Shattock's commissioned *Review of University management and governance issues arising out of the CAPSA project*.¹⁹ Shattock made suggestions which were taken forward. In the Council's *Consultation Paper on Governance* published in February 2002 it was argued that the Vice-Chancellor lacked 'sufficiently explicit authority to act on behalf of the University or to be effectively accountable for the discharge of the duties of the office.' There followed, it suggested, a 'need to empower the office of Vice-Chancellor, to give it adequate support and to sharpen its accountability'.

It was therefore proposed that 'the Vice-Chancellor be recognized in Statutes as the principal academic and administrative officer of the University', and 'be given the necessary authority to discharge these responsibilities directly or by delegation'.²⁰ The *Report of the Council on governance* which followed in June accordingly sought 'definition of the office of Vice-Chancellor' as 'principal academic and administrative officer of the University', envisaging 'strong leadership' from the Vice-Chancellor 'especially in the area of policy-formation' and 'taking initiatives'.²¹ Broers, giving his sixth Annual Address as Cambridge's Vice-Chancellor in October 2002, supported 'the proposal that the Vice-Chancellor become the Principal Academic and Administrative Officer of the University'.²²

However, in a Discussion of the governance proposals in October Stephen Cowley, a member of the Board of Scrutiny but speaking in a personal capacity, was among those critical of the proposal. 'Suppose', he said, 'that we exchange 'Chief Executive' for 'Vice-Chancellor', 'company' for 'University', and 'Board' for 'Council'. 'Would that not pass as a description of a Chief Executive Officer of a company?'²³ Feeling proved strong on this point in the Regent House. The definition did not make its way into the Statutes. The Annual Financial Statements nevertheless began to include in a statement of Corporate Governance the wording 'the Vice-Chancellor is, *de facto*, the principal academic and administrative officer of the University'.²⁴ The description appeared on the Vice-Chancellor's web page in 2021.²⁵

Cambridge's Statute C,III,3 states simply that 'the Vice-Chancellor shall enjoy the customary rights and perform the customary duties of the office' and 'and shall have such other powers and duties as may be prescribed by Statute or Ordinance'. He may call, and preside at, Congregations of the Regent House, in the discharge of its degree-awarding powers (C,III,4), provided he has himself been admitted to the degree of Master of Arts (if necessary on the recommendation of the Council).²⁶

That is clearly not all a newcomer to the University needs to know.

Oxford and Cambridge created Pro-Vice-Chancellors, on the argument that there was altogether too much responsibility for a Vice-Chancellor to carry alone. In Oxford they were something of an afterthought of the *North Commission*, emerging from the possibility that the new Heads of Division might hold some such role. Colin Matthew wrote in 1998 in the *Oxford Magazine* on the 'End of the ancient constitution'.²⁷ He was concerned that the heads of the proposed Divisions would be in effect 'four deputy Vice-Chancellors'. In 'Asking the right questions (mostly). Giving the wrong answers (mostly)', in the same issue, Fergus Millar was hostile to the creation of Divisions which he saw as 'mega-faculties'. To have these 'run by executive Deputy Vice-Chancellors' would, he thought, 'concentrate power excessively'.²⁸ The proposal to create Pro-Vice-Chancellors was debated by Congregation in January 1999. Fergus Millar pointed out that 'it is not even clearly stated anywhere that such Pro-Vice-Chancellors must already be members of Congregation, although no doubt it is assumed'.²⁹ However, it was decided that Oxford's Pro-Vice-Chancellors may be appointed from outside the University.

Cambridge had gained its first two Pro-Vice-Chancellors by the time Alec Broers became the second new-style Vice-Chancellor in 1996. Two Pro-Vice-Chancellors became five after the governance-change reforms of 2002:

*'This is in order to support the Vice-Chancellor and to give greater opportunity for senior academic leadership in the overall running of the University.'*³⁰

A *Notice* in the *Reporter* of 29 October 2003 set out their 'role' in some detail. They would have 'leadership responsibilities under the Vice-Chancellor' in the specific areas of their portfolios. The initial portfolios were defined but, as in Oxford, not fixed in constitutional permanence. They were:

'to drive strategy and policy development and to support the Vice-Chancellor in providing academic leadership to the University and its management and direction.'

They were to 'have access to the full range of administrative support available through the Unified Administrative Service' but not to have their own Secretariat. Importantly, they were to 'provide a key means of liaison between the University's institutions and the central University management and administration' and also 'function as a team'. As in Oxford they would not be Council members *ex officio*.

Cambridge still requires its Pro-Vice-Chancellors to be chosen from among its own experienced academics, who will therefore come to their Offices with a broad understanding of what they are taking on. But they are appointed for only three-years (though renewable once) and may give only 80% of their time to the task (Statute C, III, 15-7). A Cambridge Vice-Chancellor may therefore expect to work with a series of Pro-Vice-Chancellors, with portfolios subject to change and with continuing departmental or faculty responsibilities.

In Oxford the 'functions and powers' of Pro-Vice-Chancellors are left still undefined.³¹ They may be delegated by the Vice-Chancellor, but the Vice-Chancellor's powers too are vague in the extreme under Statute IX,9.

This has led to the entrusting of considerable responsibilities to Pro-Vice-Chancellors with no published information at all as to how Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellors are to work together.

Exactly how a Vice-Chancellor is to work with Pro-Vice-Chancellors has been allowed to evolve without report or record in Cambridge too. The constitutional relationship of the Offices is ill-defined. They ‘report to the Council through the Vice-Chancellor’ (Statute C,III,15), but the Vice-Chancellor does not appoint them. That is done by the Council on the recommendation of a Nominating Committee (Statute C,III,17). Their duties ‘may be prescribed by Statute or Ordinance,’ but they may also be ‘determined by the Council, or the Vice-Chancellor’.

What is the ‘Senior Leadership Team’?

A second significant change affecting the work of a Vice-Chancellor has come about in both universities with even less report or record and without formal agreement by the Regent House or Congregation. Even more nebulous in their accountability and powers than the Pro-Vice-Chancellors are the various senior administrators who together determine university policy, the ‘senior leadership team’. In neither Oxford or Cambridge has the ‘Senior Leadership Team’ the recognition of having been formally created as a committee.³²

In Oxford one searches the *Gazette* in vain for any mention except for a scattering of ‘senior leaders’ in parts of the University and the promise of training for such leadership by Staff Development. The Registrar has her own Senior Leadership Team in the UAS but that is a very different thing from the creation of such a body for the University as a whole. In Cambridge the expression seems to have been used first in the *Reporter* of 1 October 2014, in a *Notice on Appointment to three offices of Pro-Vice-Chancellor*, though such a ‘team’ was apparently already at work:

‘The need to foster and manage the University’s international ambitions will characterize much of the work of the senior leadership team in the next period and will inflect the responsibilities of all of the Pro-Vice-Chancellors.’

This *Notice* gives a clue to the make-up of the ‘team’ as including more than the Pro-Vice-Chancellors, mentioning as it does the Heads of Schools, the Registrar, and his ‘senior colleagues’.

In its *Annual Report* for 2018-9 the Council mentioned that ‘during the year, the Council and the senior leadership team considered how the budget deficit could be managed’; the ‘team’ was busy with risk management and:

‘the Vice-Chancellor and members of the senior leadership team also hosted a series of open meetings to brief staff and students on how the University was preparing for Brexit.’

The *Report* included a heading *Changes in the University’s senior leadership*, listing not only new (academic) Heads of Schools but also a new (administrative) Chief Investment Officer.³³ The most recent *Annual Report* of the Council again lists *Changes in the University’s senior leadership* this time including the appointment of the Director of Human Resources.³⁴ It therefore appears that the Senior Leadership Team includes administrative

(academic-related) as well as academic Officers of the University.

The *Annual Report of the Audit Committee* published in the *Reporter* on 2 February 2022 makes confident reference to the Senior Leadership Team, even giving it an acronym (SLT). It states without reference to any constitutional source of this authority that:

‘the University’s Senior Leadership Team is responsible for identifying and managing risks across the University’s activities, within the context of the University’s priorities and objectives. The review of risks encompasses business, operational, compliance, financial and reputational risks,’

also that:

‘A draft internal audit plan is developed around the University’s objectives and assessment of its fundamental risks, as identified by the University’s Senior Leadership Team.’

Conclusion

So the new Cambridge (and Oxford for that matter) Vice-Chancellor needs to be aware that he or she will have surprisingly little power in the direct sense. The defined powers lie mainly with Congregation or the Regent House and the universities’ Councils. They will find themselves meeting on Mondays and at other times in an inner cabinet, without minutes kept or any record of who was present.

The pressures of business increasingly encourage Vice-Chancellors to work within such ‘Senior Leadership Teams’, although neither ‘leadership’ nor ‘seniority’ fits comfortably within Oxbridge’s historic ‘community of equals’. However this situation is relatively recent and new. Neither university has solved or even properly identified the accountability to their democracies of the exercise of such undefined ‘powers’.

¹<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/depth/heavy-lies-oxbridge-crown>

²Special Regulations for University Officers: the Vice-Chancellor, Ordinances p. 695. The advisory committee shall consist of not less than eight persons, a majority of whom shall be resident members of the Regent House and at least two of whom shall be persons who are not resident members of the University.

³<https://magazine.alumni.cam.ac.uk/vice-chancellor82/>

⁴See: Note 31

⁵https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/1406/ofs2018_01.pdf.

⁶<https://www.universitychairs.ac.uk/>.

⁷<https://www.universitychairs.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CUC-HE-Code-of-Governance-publication-final.pdf>

⁸www.universitychairs.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/IPN5-Recruiting-a-VC.pdf

⁹www.universitychairs.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/IPN5-Recruiting-a-VC.pdf

¹⁰*Reporter* (7 October, 1998).

¹¹*Reporter* (7 October, 1998).

¹²*Reporter* (2 November, 2001).

¹³*Reporter* (3 February, 2002).

¹⁴*Reporter* (26, June, 2002).

¹⁵Alec Broers, Annual Address, *Reporter* (9 October 2002).

¹⁶*Reporter* (16 October, 2002).

¹⁷*Reporter* (20 December, 2006).

¹⁸<https://www.v-c.admin.cam.ac.uk/>

¹⁹Special Regulations: If a Grace has been submitted and approved for the admission of the Vice-Chancellor to the degree of Master of Arts under Statute B II 2(a) or a degree by incorporation under Statute B II 2(b), he or she shall be presented for that degree by the Registry. Unless the Chancellor is present, the Vice-Chancellor shall then assume the presidency of the Congregation.

²⁰*Oxford Magazine* 6th, HT, Hilary, 1998, pp.8-9.

²¹*Oxford Magazine* 6th, HT, Hilary, 1998, pp. 3-5.

²²*Gazette*, Supplement (1) (13 January 1999).

²³*Reporter* (26, June, 2002).

²⁴Statute IX, 16 and Council Regulations 2 of 2002, Regulations for University Officers, 10-11.

²⁵<https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2020-21/special/05/>

²⁶*Reporter*, 22 January, 2020.

²⁷*Reporter*, 15 December 2021.

²⁸<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/depth/heavy-lies-oxbridge-crown>

²⁹Special Regulations for University Officers: the Vice-Chancellor, Ordinances p. 695. The advisory committee shall consist of not less than eight persons, a majority of whom shall be resident members of the Regent House and at least two of whom shall be persons who are not resident members of the University.

³⁰<https://magazine.alumni.cam.ac.uk/vice-chancellor82/>

³¹This remained until now in the Special Regulations for the Vice-Chancellor at (7), *Reporter* (16 October, 2002), but is to be corrected.

³²https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/1406/ofs2018_01.pdf

³³<https://www.universitychairs.ac.uk/>.

³⁴<https://www.universitychairs.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CUC-HE-Code-of-Governance-publication-final.pdf>

³⁵www.universitychairs.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/IPN5-Recruiting-a-VC.pdf.

³⁶www.universitychairs.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/IPN5-Recruiting-a-VC.pdf.

³⁷*Reporter* (7 October, 1998).

³⁸*Reporter* (7 October, 1998).

St Christopher

At my age with an L-plate. *Signal! Signal!*
Turning, is it west? *It's left!* I'm turning,

The indicator like a little heart
Ticks red-red red-red red-red, and the foes –

Hen party limos, Übers, HGVs –
Dash by. Wrong lane, wrong gear, veering claxons.

Fifty-odd years ago – '68 – was different,
Prague woke up and all the students in the world

Began to chant, smur mur, ride the magic bus.
Love was in the smoke, in rifle barrels

Flowers, grasses, even after April fourth,
I've been to the mountaintop, he said, *I've seen*

The Promised Land. (Bang bang.)
My young instructor
Displayed a dashboard Saint Christopher

Shouldering a sweet-featured plastic Jesus.
I'm not a Roman Catholic, but he wasn't either,

And nor was the baby when they crossed the Jordan.
With him the earth seemed safely flat, before Columbus,

Like in the Bible everything got to mean,
But mean obliquely, till God's face broke through.

I passed the test and you and I drove off together
Like in a movie or a fairy tale.

Where shall we go? This way, that way, stop.
You'd step from the car at the lake and amble out

On water smooth as oil, leaving little footprints
Like star points on the luminous meniscus.

Why did we learn to swim? It was good to watch you
Walk to the islet, wave, and come back barefoot

To where I waited, hazed in weed, the engine purring,
Was it Woodstock on the radio, time didn't pass,

Day without acceleration repeated day,
There was only forever, which seemed long enough.

When exactly did earth clench into a fist,
Gentle clock hands grow furious and threaten?

We'd learned to swim, why hadn't we tried flying,
Taken to the air, left our marks in the nimbus?

Horizons weren't eternal after all. Half a century on,
I'm at the same tight roundabout near Cheadle

I circled back then a dozen times. It's not
The same, though. Three spokes have morphed to six;

The calm instructor of that sunny March
When you were everything I wanted to drive to

And drive out and back with were young also,
Has given way to rain, and rouged Miss Morris,

Horn-rimmed, lips splitting like ripe fruit in interdiction.
The posh-spoken sat-nav takes her side (I'm that bad),

Iterates previous instructions, *At the next...*
Until she gives up, frigidly: *Consult the map.*

I can't turn her voice off (or your voice on.
I love you which is why I'm here at all).

I say *here* but it's different. Simple signs
Are now a circuit-board, I recognise

Expostulating red and white *You musts*,
You must nots; round red ones, yellow.

Bear in mind, green may not mean go.
Give way, give warning, give give give. Give over.

Not to worry. But I do worry. 30, 50, 60;
Stopping times... I've worried ever since

I very slowly backed your red Cortina
(It had been in your garage all the months

Since you flatlined, dark nights and darker days)
Over a low bollard and a young policeman

With sideboards and a stammer came to check,
Made me step out of the car and blow hard

Into a plastic mouthpiece, scrabble in my wallet
Among memberships, receipts and travel passes

For the plastic license, like an expired credit card.
He turned it over in his hands, sorrowful

With satisfaction, *This s-s-says* he said at last,
01.03.2019, expired.

What did he know of where I'd been, how often,
The long excursions across Europe, as far east

As India in your doughty little Renault,
Always for you, with you, to you; routinely

Safe every thousand, thousand thousand miles.
Now it's lessons, the driving test next week.

Was ever such a neophyte: white beard,
Tweed cap, thick lenses, fists at three and nine.

A danger to other motorists he said.
I wasn't till he told me, then I was.

He followed me home (I wasn't going home)
And confiscated my old license there.

It's like renewing marriage vows. Instruction,
Exam, and then the sacrament. At twenty two

We were going places, together. I had
Motive. Now I'm stuck here so why bother?

No way to cross the broken bridge between us,
Go to Chester, or as far east as Parsley Hay.

Old drivers learn a different skill from kids.
It was easy with a lungful of weed and sunshine.

I wrestle the gears, remembering the Triumph
Convertible we boasted in our twenties,

The open road, pure amplitude, without
Tree or tree shadow, leaf or leaf bud, just

Space and speed, the way the sunlight changed you,
How we kindled, how we touched, then the mountains,

Starting slow, rising in gut-churning chicanes;
Reaching out to clutch your arm or knee,

Leaning across to kiss, finding a lay-by.
There was much to say beyond language, and maps.

Now trucks overtake in the slow lane.
A motorbike flashes and I brake to scare him.

It's winter. Winter. Short days' radiance
Between parentheses of dark. We pass the Crem

Where you promised you'd *enjoy that final smoke.*
I find the windshield squirter, then the headlights,

High lights, low lights, central beam.
A few more lessons yet, says the instructress.

Reaching out to clutch your knee,
I come to in the present tense, swerve at

The third exit, in the middle lane. The instructress
Slaps my hand, but her tone begins to change.

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Climate Change: A People Perspective

MICHAEL HITCHMAN

Early Observations on Climate Change

Many, many millions of words have been written about the effect of societal activity on climate change. It all started 2400 years ago. In the 4th century BC, Theophrastus, Aristotle's pupil, reported that draining marshes led to colder local temperatures, and clearing of forests produced warmer climes¹. Rather more recently, in 1896, the famous Swedish scientist Svante Arrhenius, a Nobel Prize winner in 1903, published a 39-page paper² in which he estimated the effect of variations in aerial carbonic acid (the name for carbon dioxide, CO₂, at that time) on ground temperature; he did not explicitly say that burning fossil fuels would cause global warming, but he was clearly aware that they were a potentially significant source of carbon dioxide.

Sixteen years later an incredibly far-sighted article about the effect of burning coal on climate appeared in the US *Popular Mechanics Magazine*, a very ordinary but practical monthly publication sold for the general public in newsagents³. It described weather of unparalleled severity that swept over the country in 1911 with cities baking, and the burning sun and hot winds withering corn, costing farmers millions of dollars a day. Elsewhere, Europe was scorched, with Arctic regions of open water where there had always been solid ice. Then in August the floodgates of the heavens were opened, and many states and other global regions were deluged. In the autumn there were more violent storms than could be remembered, while December was remarkable for its high temperatures. The article referred to Arrhenius's observations of the effect of carbon dioxide on the climate and it said:

"Since burning coal produces carbon dioxide it may be inquired whether the enormous use of that fuel in modern times may not be an important factor in filling the atmosphere with this substance and consequently in indirectly raising the temperature of the earth."

It then makes some estimates based on the tonnage of coal mined in the US in 1911 extended to a whole world basis and concludes that the atmospheric CO₂ would double in about 200 years. That is remarkably prescient since the Met Office showed last year that it had increased by about 40% since 1912⁴.

Increasing Interest in the Causes of Climate Change

Up to that point there were relatively few other articles on climate change, and then in the 1930s, an English steam engineer, Guy Callendar, demonstrated that the Earth's land temperature had increased over the previous 50 years. He developed the theory that linked rising CO₂ concentrations in the atmosphere to global temperature⁵. Most scientists found his arguments implausible. It took nearly 30 years more before studies were started

to document the effects of the combustion of fossil fuels on the distribution of CO₂ in the atmosphere⁶. Developments continued slowly, but by 2000 global warming was widely recognised and the science really took off. From 2012 until last year there were nearly 90,000 climate related papers and articles published. So now indeed, there are millions of words on climate change. And what are all those papers and those that preceded them about? Well, they have included the climate conditions at any given time, causes of climate change, possible future climate changes, and limiting such changes.

It would not be unreasonable to ask, therefore, 'What could possibly be added that is new and unsaid?' Having set the scene, the clue lies in the title. So, read on.

Viewpoints on Climate Change Impact Drivers

There has been a very vociferous debate with doubts and scepticism being expressed over the influence of anthropogenic-caused global warming. For example, other factors often quoted included variations in the strength of the sun, changes in the earth's orbit, tilt and precession, variability in ocean currents and CO₂ release, and shifting plate tectonics and resulting volcanic eruption⁷.

The resulting partisan public divide about causes of climate change has been indicated in a report investigating public climate change knowledge carried out by Yale School of the Environment and Facebook Data for Good with more than 76,000 interviews of people aged 18 and over from more than 30 countries and territories worldwide⁸; various weighting processes were employed to try and ensure the survey represented the demographics for each country.

For convenience here we look at just 11 major European countries and the USA. It was found that 6 to 15% and 16% of people, respectively, believed that climate change is caused mostly by natural factors. Based on equal contributions to climate change from human and natural causes the figures are 25 to 40% and 34%. And while most respondents in all 31 surveyed countries and territories say that climate change is at least partially caused by human activities, majorities in only 13 of them say that climate change is mostly caused by human activities. We are beginning to get a people perspective, and there is quite a bit of scepticism.

That is all in marked contrast to an analysis of 3000 peer reviewed climate related scientific papers which showed that there was a consensus of greater than 99% on human-caused climate change⁹. The results confirm numerous previous other studies, and the authors conclude that there is no further scientific debate about whether or not climate change is human-caused. In the light of such overwhelming evidence, it is not clear why, based on the Yale report, about 90 million people in Europe and the USA totally doubt anthropogenic climate change and around

250 million believe humans only make a 50% contribution. Perhaps it is purely because of genuine scientific illiteracy or by lack of understanding. If so, there is obviously quite a lot of education that is needed. And that is certainly reflected in what people feel themselves. For the 11 European countries, 44 to 77% feel they need a lot more or some more information about climate change and for the USA it's 44%, a total of several hundred million people⁸ – another aspect of a people perspective.

Sources of Information about Climate Change

There is no lack of information. In addition to the 90,000 papers mentioned above, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the United Nations' climate-science-focused organization with 195 member countries, published in 2021 its latest report summarising the findings of 234 scientists from their reading of over 14,000 climate-science-related research papers¹⁰. The report is certainly nonpartisan. Before publication, authors will have addressed over 75,000 comments on their work; there is an intense and transparent review process. Furthermore, the IPCC doesn't tell governments what to do. Its goal is to provide the latest knowledge on climate change, its future risks, and options for reducing the rate of warming.

What is happening now Worldwide?

The IPCC report shows how climate change is already affecting almost every inhabited region across the globe, with human influence contributing to many observed changes in weather and climate extremes. Above average hot temperatures are occurring in 91% of the earth's regions, heavy precipitation and flooding are affecting 42%, and agricultural and ecological drought is found in 27%. In addition, it looks at possible climate futures by running computer models that simulate the earth's climate. With these models and with the globe heating up by a specific amount, it can be seen what might happen in terms of the ice sheets, sea-level rise, and droughts, and what the outcomes could be if the earth heats up by less or more than that. It's encouraging that the model shows that for a 1°C of global warming, which we have experienced, a comparison between simulated and observed outcomes are in good agreement. Extrapolation to changes of 1.5°, 2° and 4°C predicts progressively dramatic worldwide climatic impact drivers that lead to extremes with increased frequency and intensity of excessive temperature, precipitation, drought, tropical cyclones, reductions in Arctic Sea ice and snow cover, and permafrost thawing, all with devastating effects on society and ecosystems; cf.¹¹

Of course, models are just that. They cannot predict with 100% certainty, but 20 distinct models produce similar results. And the latest models do not focus solely on warming gas emission changes and the physical science but use shared socioeconomic pathways (SSPs) which consider social and economic factors. They are concerned with what the world might look like not only in terms of temperature, but also in terms of global demographics, equity, education, access to health, consumption, diet, fossil fuel use, and geopolitics, all very people oriented – a people perspective.

How are we going to ameliorate Climate Change?

It clearly is a very complex problem. Here, let us consider just the physical world. For that we have a situation where the science is clear about causes of climate change and their effects, and there are lots of sources of information, yet there is a large number of people who feel they don't know enough about what is happening and what will happen. Unfortunately, the sources are often not readily accessible or comprehensible to non-specialists; the IPCC report is 4000 pages long and a 35-page summary is detailed and dense.

Stopping climate change is not going to be easy and even if emission of warming gases were stopped today, global warming and climate change will continue to affect future generations. In this way, humanity is "committed" to some level of climate change. And because of this commitment, responding to climate change needs a two-pronged approach – Mitigation and Adaptation¹².

Mitigating climate change is about reducing emissions and stabilizing the levels of heat-trapping gases in the atmosphere that are warming our planet. Mitigation strategies include adopting renewable energy sources like solar, wind and tide, and alternate energy sources such as hydrogen, biofuels, and batteries, particularly for helping the development of more sustainable transport such as bus rapid transit, and electric vehicles. It is also about the promotion of more sustainable uses of land and forests to lessen the effects of warming through CO₂ absorption; other more sophisticated removal techniques are also being investigated¹³.

Adaptation is adjusting to the climate change already underway by tailoring how we live to manage the increasingly extreme disasters we are seeing and their associated risks. It also encompasses making the most of any potential beneficial opportunities associated with climate change; for example, attuning farming methods to longer growing seasons, cutting energy consumption, reducing waste with recycling to cut back production intensity and to help sustain natural resources, encouraging less use of carbon-based transport, and changing diets.

Educating People

How can mitigation and adaptation be implemented? As indicated above, a lot of education is needed, but it is clearly not an overnight task. It will last for generations. As a start, school curricula must be greener and more oriented to sustainability. And for the general public, climate change must become part of everyday life with regular back-ups in the media as new developments happen, geared to different levels of understanding. For both cases there needs to be a public understanding of the factors affecting climate change and of possible solutions. The Yale report⁸ reveals that is just what people want so they can understand and appreciate as best they can very practical issues of climate change that will impinge upon their lives. Education is the first step in creating an enhanced people perspective and involvement.

In parallel with education there have to be schemes to encourage individuals and groups to participate in local and national strategies for mitigation and adaptation. Mitigating strategies will be largely dominated with changes by government and industry at national and international levels, while adaptation can impinge much more on local communities and individuals. To get business leaders and politicians to implement mitigating actions there will undoubtedly be the need for public engagement, pressure, and demand. That will be true too in provincial and local environs. The Yale report also indicates substantial numbers of respondents in every country including majorities in 19 of the 31 countries surveyed, say they “definitely” or “probably” would participate, or currently are participating, in a citizens’ campaign to convince leaders to take action to reduce climate change. Citizens need to be both well-informed and emboldened to be involved in decision-making processes. The power in people can be stronger than the people in power! That is indeed a people perspective at work.

Yes, there are many projects associated with climate change, but the one project that is most neglected is that of the human perspective. Any green revolution will involve major societal changes, but they will not happen without getting people right at the centre of climate change. It’s people not just projects. People are the most important resource in the world.

In addition to getting people involved, though, there is another people perspective to consider.

Disasters resulting from Climate Change

In 2021, weather events, linked to a changing climate, brought economic disaster and misery to millions around the world. A study on identifying the cost¹⁴ points out that 2021 was the sixth time global catastrophes crossed the \$100 billion loss threshold. That is economic capital, but there is the effect on social capital too. Social capital is the networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively. Without it societies, economies, institutions, and political systems could not exist. And like the worldwide distribution of physical effects such as excessive temperatures¹⁰, the social disruption being inflicted by climate disaster is global too.

Climate-driven migration forces are being felt across the world as people struggle with droughts, heatwaves, storms and burst rivers on a scale never seen before. In 2020, 40.5 million people were displaced, the highest level in 10 years¹⁵.

What in practical terms does that mean? Perspective-taking is the act of perceiving a situation or understanding a concept from an alternative point of view, such as that of another individual. So, when we hear or, more significantly, see what is happening to others because of climate change how does it affect us? Let me draw an analogy to a simple concept in physical science.

Empathy as a Critical Factor in dealing with Climate Change

Gravity is an interactive force between two objects. Think about the story of Newton observing the fall of an apple from a tree towards the ground of the earth. It caused him to ponder why apples always fall to the ground, and helped to inspire him to eventually develop his law of gravitation.

How is interaction between a climate disaster and an external observer analogous to that? Gravity is a force that we do not understand or how it works, but everyone experiences it wherever they go. Now I would suggest a disaster is like the earth and we are like the apple. What is the interaction? We feel an emotion: a sympathy, an understanding, a sensitivity, some fellow feeling with those suffering. We have compassion for them. Compassion, like gravity, is something we all experience without any palpable understanding. But it’s there and very real.

Of course, there are degrees and intensities of compassion, and that variation for us in relation to a climate disaster we could express as being dependent on our proximity to the disaster, and on our sensitivity to and awareness of it. For a disaster in our own neighbourhood, we will surely experience a greater intensity of compassion than with one that is happening on the other side of the world, and also if there are people we feel an affinity to.

To heighten the proximity effect on our compassion we can readily view events occurring many thousands of miles away with aid of modern technology; how often do we hear a newscaster giving the warning that ‘some of our viewers may find the scenes disturbing’? That is straightforward, but how can we feel a closer rapport with those who are experiencing a disaster? In seeing people suffering, particularly children and aged folk, we can think of them to be our sons and daughters, or our parents and grandparents who have seen their homes of a lifetime burnt to the ground or swept away by flood waters. We can identify with them, and we can build up a fellow-feeling and like mindedness, a togetherness and closeness to them. In other words, a strong empathy with them.

In practical terms it can mean that we can be prompted to find ways to offer solace and succour to our fellow world citizens. We are also likely to get more involved in mitigation and adaptation to climate change. That can be at a personal level in our local communities and environments, or it can be in a larger milieu in working towards getting the movers and shakers to also identify with the disasters outside their own territories.

For the future, in coping with climate change there has to be an adoption of a different stance and a new way of thinking.

An approach built upon three Es.

Educating people to acquire an appreciation and understanding of the complexity of the problems we face so that we can get involved and to realise that it is going to need radical, sweeping changes through society if we are going to fix climate change.

Encouraging people to get involved locally, nationally and internationally to persuade our fellow citizens at all levels to make those changes.

Empathising with people who are experiencing destruction, disaster, debilitation, and loss.

We are living in unprecedented and formidable times. What we do really, really matters, and to be successful we

must have a fuller people perspective, for only people can make it happen.

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world.”

Gandhi

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eighth week

Old Bodleian Library

Sir – Could one of your readers interested in old buildings explain a large crack in the masonry of the Old Bodleian Library? It's in the north passageway of the Schools Quad, and runs from the vaulting down the adjacent wall. I first noticed it last autumn, and wondered what could be causing it and whether it should be of concern. I asked the Library, of course; the query was referred to their Facilities section, from whom no reply has been received.

Yours sincerely,
DANA JOSEPHSON
Witney

TO THE EDITOR

The costs of whistleblowing

Sir – It is hard to keep up with the sheer volume of central administrative failures and University mis-governance. A very recent case – not to be ignored by your readers or indeed by the Chancellor – is the judgment, confirmed on Appeal, of an Employment Tribunal* awarding damages of some £1.5 million against the Said Business School's trading arm for improper dismissal (not conforming to ACAS procedures etc.) of a

staff member who, moreover, was a whistle-blower on the matter of questionable business practices pursued by the self-same trading arm.

Regardless of who ultimately forks out the £1.5 million in question, at the bottom of the pile are the few dozen HR, legal and other administrators employed in Wellington Square to ensure that such a sequence of events can never happen.

Yours sincerely,
PETER OPPENHEIMER
Christ Church

* https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/618e3b7e8fa8f50379269c18/Oxford_Said_Business_School_and_Dr_Andrew_White_v_Dr_Elaine_Heslop_EA-2021-000268-VP_previously_UKEAT-PA011021VP_.pdf

REVIEWS

How Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, Mary Midgley and Iris Murdoch Revolutionized Ethics

The Women Are Up to Something. By Benjamin Lipscomb. Oxford University Press, 2021; 326 pages; \$27.95 and £20



This enthralling work explores the lives and philosophizing of four women friends who got to know each other in Oxford just before and during the second world war. Three of them, Anscombe, Midgley and Murdoch were from middle class families, well enough schooled in the classics to read *Lit. Hum.* Philippa Foot, *née* Bosanquet, granddaughter of a U.S. President, took PPE, having overcome the disadvantage of an aristocratic Yorkshire upbringing where etiquette and horse-riding were held to be more important than a formal education.

Anscombe, who would become the leading philosopher among them, trod a fiercely independent path from the start. A convert to Roman Catholicism in her first year at St. Hugh's, she soon incurred the displeasure of her Archbishop by publishing, with a fellow-undergraduate, a pamphlet opposing the war. Though she displayed dismal ignorance of Roman history, Anscombe's brilliant philosophy papers secured a first in Greats. Soon after graduating she married a fellow Catholic convert, the philosopher and wartime conscientious objector Peter Geach. Living precariously on a graduate studentship in post-war Cambridge, Anscombe – now mother of two of their eventual seven children – fell under the spell of Wittgenstein.

She was famous for her beautiful voice and her foul language, for heavy smoking and habitually wearing trousers, which would later incur a Proctorial reprimand when she wore them to lecture in the Examination Schools. Back in Oxford with a Mary Somerville Research Fellowship, she went on to publish translations of Wittgenstein's works and occasionally took him to tea in the Somerville SCR. In 1956 Anscombe made a lonely stand in Congregation opposing the award of an honorary degree to Truman, whom she considered a mass murderer for authorizing the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The move gained worldwide publicity, with headlines such as 'Oxford Honors Truman over Woman's

Protest'. Then came the two publications for which she became most famous: the monograph *Intention* and a seminal article 'Modern Moral Philosophy'. After twenty years at Somerville with Philippa Foot as her loyal colleague, Anscombe left to take up the Cambridge Philosophy Chair formerly held by Wittgenstein.

The Somerville contemporaries Iris Murdoch and Mary Midgley remained lifetime friends, despite Murdoch beating Midgley to the Philosophy Fellowship at St. Anne's. Midgley made her name as a philosopher decades later than the other three. Working in Newcastle, she applied an expertise in animal behaviour to moral philosophy, and entered into the fray against Richard Dawkins.

Iris Murdoch gained early recognition as an interpreter of Sartre and his existentialist writings but she came to doubt her abilities as a philosopher and resigned her tutorial Fellowship in 1963, by then an acclaimed novelist. Readers of the masterly biography by Peter Conradi will recall Murdoch's many tangled love affairs, and her lifelong remorse over an event involving her friend Philippa Bosanquet when they shared a flat in wartime London. Murdoch stole Philippa's lover, Tommy Balogh, dismissing her own boy-friend, the future historian M.R.D. Foot. In short order the spurned Michael Foot fell in love with Philippa; they married after his release from prisoner-of-war camp. The rift between the two women only fully healed when Michael left his wife, though Philippa had insisted Murdoch lodge with the pair of them in Park Town even during the marriage. In 1948, spending time in Cambridge, Murdoch briefly developed an obsessive love for Anscombe, later tearing out parts of her diary but leaving what Lipscomb calls ten pages of tortured longing and self-criticism. Anscombe fled to Dublin to seek help and counsel from Wittgenstein, who advised her to resume smoking.

While the difficult, combative and unconventional Anscombe was always something of an outsider, Foot had a more conventional Oxford career, serving her undergraduate college Somerville for over twenty years. Like other Fellows of the impoverished women's Colleges in the post-war period she taught long hours for meagre pay, but still found time to help Oxfam and to cherish refugee scholars. Both Foot and the formidable Somerville Principal, Janet Vaughan, were staunch supporters of Anscombe. In 1958 Foot wrote an impassioned letter to Vaughan offering to resign or to job-share so that Somerville could retain Anscombe at the end of her research funding. The two philosophers, Foot and Anscombe, could be found every afternoon in

the Somerville SCR deep in philosophical conversation, with Foot later declaring that she owed everything to her discussions with Anscombe. They attended one another's seminars and Anscombe tried out on Foot her early ideas for *Intention*.

So close a friendship between the atheist Foot and ardent Catholic Anscombe was remarkable, and it is not surprising to learn that there was brief rift in the nineties after Anscombe berated Foot on the subject of Oxfam's support for contraception. Ripe for a change in 1969, Foot left Oxford for a variety of appointments in the U.S. where she achieved considerable renown, not least for her invention of the 'trolley problem', before retiring to Oxford. At eighty she published a slim but influential monograph, *Natural Goodness*.

As an undergraduate reading Greats at Somerville in the sixties, I had the great fortune to study philosophy with these two eminent thinkers. Two more different tutorial approaches can hardly be imagined. Foot, as I came to realize later, assigned the topics likely to feature on our finals papers. In Moral Philosophy at the time this meant a thin diet, and her heart was not really in it, though she had made important contributions herself to the debates (the famous Foot-Hare controversy). Anscombe had a reputation for long silences in tutorials, and I experienced some of these, but her passionate engagement with the subject was electrifying and inspiring. She assigned us only subjects she was working on at the time, and treated us as equals in discussing them in the sitting room of her St John Street house, oblivious to the juddering of the washing machine above or the occasional incursion of a toddler. I became immersed in and inspired by her philosophical heroes, notably Frege and Aristotle. Wittgenstein was conspicuously absent from her recommended reading.

Were these four women, the 'wartime quarter' as they have come to be known, engaged on a single philosophical project? Up to a point, in so far as they nursed a shared opposition. Mary Midgley in her memoir tells how in the forties the four of them despaired of the state of moral philosophy in Oxford, when Ayer's logical positivism still held sway, and with it what was lampooned as the Boo-Hurrah theory of moral discourse, emotivism. Lipscomb's book takes off from an account Foot later gave of how watching newsreel footage of the concentration camps made her determined to resist the prevalent view that moral judgments merely expressed the approval or the disapproval of the speaker. Foot recalls that

she reflected: holding that what the Nazis had done was wicked 'is not just a personal decision... or an expression of disapproval. There is something objective here.'

While the focus in Oxford remained (for far too long) on the correct understanding of moral judgements, each of Foot, Anscombe and Murdoch published articles or essays that went against the tide in varying ways, the tide at whose head was Balliol fellow, later Professor of Moral Philosophy, R. M. Hare.

Hare, who had resumed his B.A. studies after army service and release from Japanese prisoner-of-war camps (including some terrible months on the Burmese railway), became famous through his 1952 *The Language of Morals*. Rejecting A.J. Ayer's emotivism but not the world picture underpinning it, which left no room for objective values, Hare developed his own understanding of moral judgements known as universal prescriptivism. According to this, judgements such as 'I ought to return that money' are disguised imperatives to myself and to others similarly placed. Foot made her name opposing such 'formal' understandings of 'ought' and 'good', insisting that form alone cannot ensure that something counts as a moral principle; there must be some recognizable connection to human concerns and well-being.

In her famous 'Modern Moral Philosophy' of 1958, Anscombe did not offer a rival understanding of the moral 'ought' but proposed that it, together with the concepts of duty and obligation 'ought to be jettisoned if this is psychologically possible'. (Her very sentence suggests it is not.) Why? Because these no longer make sense in a milieu that has largely abandoned a divine law concept of ethics. This puzzled many readers, coming from the pen of a philosopher well-known for her devout Catholic beliefs. The same paper became even more famous for Anscombe's trenchant criticism of most contemporary moral philosophers as 'consequentialists', holding that there is no category of act that may not, in some circumstances, be justified by its consequences. The failure to condemn Truman's authorization of the atom bombs bore this out.

"Down with Ayer and Hare, bring back insights from Aristotle": my crude slogan summarizes the common goal the author ascribes to his heroines. In different ways they drew on Aristotle (and Aquinas) in advocating the study of human virtues and their contribution to human flourishing. And they rejected the picture on which ethical thinking is ultimately a matter of choice, something Murdoch discerned both in the existentialists and in the work of A. J. Ayer. Lipscomb is plainly in huge sympathy with this trajectory, and his highly readable account gives due credit to each of the major players. Noting how Midgley's insights in the sixties anticipated some of Foot's major claims in her 2001 monograph *Natural Goodness*, he suggests with some justice

that Foot did not register the importance of the Newcastle outsider Midgley's work, although their mutual friend Iris Murdoch had praised it to her in a letter. So even-handed is Lipscomb that he includes an illuminating and sympathetic picture of the arch-enemy R. M. Hare, who famously would never admit he was wrong or that he had changed his mind.

While identifying a shared goal among the four women of injecting Aristotelian insights into moral philosophy, Lipscomb notes a challenge to including Murdoch in this project. Here's an anecdote to support that challenge. The only time I spoke to Murdoch, she asked me, *à propos* of moral philosophy, 'Are you an Aristotelian or a Platonist?' (meaning roughly: do you favour a view that locates value in concrete situations of human interactions, or in some abstract goodness.) After I declared for Aristotle, she retorted 'I am a Platonist', and turned away to the lunch table.

The author, a professional philosopher new to life-writing, was inspired to the project by his admiration for the philosophical writings of his subjects and by Midgley's memoir, *The Owl of Minerva*. There she reflects on how conditions in Oxford during World War II helped each of them to find a voice in philosophy. Remarkably, another work on the same four philosophers was also inspired by Midgley; conceived independently and written by two women, it will appear this very month.*

Lipscomb has cast his net very wide in his research and managed to interview or correspond with a huge number of people with relevant memories, some of them alas no longer with us. The resulting slice of intellectual history, with its lively and sympathetic portraits of these path-breaking women, fully bears out the back-cover blurb from Anthony Kenny, who confirms the authenticity of the book's background and praises it as compulsively readable. Other readers, even those without a background in philosophy, will surely agree.

*Clare Mac Cumhaill and Rachel Wiseman, *Metaphysical Animals: how four women brought philosophy back to life*, Chatto & Windus, 2022.

LESLEY BROWN

Grasping the nettle

Munich – The Edge of War (Directed by Christian Schwchow)



In the popular mind Neville Chamberlain has long been a figure of disgrace, who appeased Hitler and laboured under the illusion that he had achieved 'peace in our time'. He had to be cleared out of the way, so that the war could be waged, and

Churchill installed in his celebrated and strategic place. More cautious commentators have suggested that Chamberlain's actions bought Britain a little time to prepare for war, and that in any case no one should be castigated who having lived through the horrors of World War I wanted at all costs to steer clear of another catastrophic conflict.

The purpose of this film is to alter perceptions, revise history, and present Chamberlain as a figure not deserving ridicule and worse. Jeremy Irons does a magnificent job. He looks like Chamberlain and sounds like him, and he comes across as strong-minded and decisive. Hitler (Ulrich Matthes) is far less successful. He neither looks nor sounds like Hitler, and lacks manic charisma.

With recent history the actors always face a challenge: that we have objective evidence from old newsreels of what the figures looked like and sounded like. There's little or no room for manoeuvre. The script is generally good, and often commendably in German, although Chamberlain says at one point:

'You cannot play poker with a gangster without having some cards up one's sleeve.'

He should have said 'your sleeve'.

The film will generate debate, and cause us to take another look at the late 'thirties, but it is not a work that will enable us to have reliable and well-informed views of the crisis. In other words it is largely a waste of time. Certainly a waste of time so far as history is concerned, although it might serve its purpose as a bit of light entertainment. Entertainment but not enlightenment.

* * *

The trouble is that one keeps recalling, as one watches, a line from Andrew Marvell's 'An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland': 'Nature that hateth emptiness/ Allows of penetration less.' Into actual history in this film are inserted two invented figures, the Englishman Hugh Legat (George MacKay) and the German Paul von Hartmann (Jannis Niewöhner). They became friends at Oxford in the early thirties – cue a Commemorative Ball with a large Catherine wheel – and meet up again during the negotiations in Munich, when von Hartmann delivers to Legat a document that lays down in black and white that Hitler's intentions are not to stop after the first expansionist mouthful. Paul von Hartmann meets Chamberlain for a few minutes, and attempts to spell out the danger. This is one more example in the long line of historical fictions (and this film began its life as a novel by Robert Harris) in which minor figures are invented to provide an entry into events. In this situation it's best to leave the major figures in peripheral status, because once one attempts to show them and make them do things they didn't do they bump up

against incontrovertible fact.

Walter Scott was intelligent enough to realise this in *Waverley*, when Bonnie Prince Charlie is not centre stage but has a walk-on part. The heavy lifting is done by invented characters. This is Edward Waverley in Holyrood Palace:

'To be thus personally solicited for assistance by a prince whose form and manners, as well as the spirit which he displayed in this singular enterprise, answered his ideas of a hero of romance; to be courted by him in the ancient halls of his paternal palace, recovered by the sword which he was already bending towards other conquests, gave Edward, in his own eyes, the dignity and importance which he had ceased to consider as his attributes. Rejected, slandered, and threatened upon the one side, he was irresistibly attracted to the cause which the prejudices of education and the political principles of his family had already recommended as the most just. These thoughts rushed through his mind like a torrent, sweeping before them every consideration of an opposite tendency,—the time, besides, admitted of no deliberation,—and Waverley, kneeling to Charles Edward, devoted his heart and sword to the vindication of his rights!' (Volume 2, chapter 11)

In the film Paul von Hartmann almost assassinate Hitler – which draws Hitler into the magic circle of fiction. Not a good place for an actual figure to be.

On his return in the plane Chamberlain is aware that he has bought the nation some time, and that war will come. So he was not such a fool after all. Whether this is true to life who knows?

There is a curious gap in the film. When Neville Chamberlain set off for Munich from Heston aerodrome in September 1938 he quoted Hotspur from Shakespeare's *Henry IV*:

'Out of this nettle danger, we pluck this flower safety.'

It was cut in the film. Was the Director worried that it would frighten the horses?

And Irons was capable of speaking the line. Years ago the Brasenose undergraduates read the whole of Shakespeare aloud in Lecture Room XI (now the Amersi Room) for charity. Jeremy Irons kicked off the day with the Prologue to *Henry V*. Beautifully performed, and he had just got off some red-eye plane. He deserves his place in Heaven for that.

A little later, when Chamberlain retreated somewhat from his appeasement position, he quoted these lines from Shakespeare's Philip the Bastard in *King John* in a speech in Blackburn on 22 February 1939:

*'This England never did, nor never shall,
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,
But when it first did help to wound itself.
Now these her princes are come home again,
Come the three corners of the world in arms,
And we shall shock them.
Nought shall make us rue, If England to
itself do rest but true.'*

It shows he had some literary resources, and unlike today these lines were not produced from Google or Wikipedia by some ancillary flunkey. They were in his memory store.

* * *

Munich – The Edge of War has turned out to be timely, in view of the unfolding Ukraine crisis. Does history constitute a warning? Using the analogy that if Hitler had been stopped earlier the Second World War might not have occurred, should Putin be stopped now, and at great cost if necessary? Historical analogies can be very dangerous and delusive, and it's better to come to decisions on courses of action with immediate considerations in mind.

The novel opens in 1932. Wouldn't it have been better to open it in 1933 when the famous 'King and Country' debate took place in the Oxford Union? Churchill was less than pleased by the result. We could have followed the undergraduates who eventually came to see the error of their

ways, despite having voted for the motion. It is not always easy to discover what the population thought about appeasement. Many thought that after the First World War Europe didn't really want another.

As it happens in Oxford we had an interesting indicator in October 1938 when a by-election took place. The world was watching. Quentin Hogg was the pro-appeasement candidate, A. D. Lindsay, Master of Balliol, the anti-appeasement candidate. Hogg got in with 15,979 votes; Lindsay had 12,363. The episode features, famously, in Canto 14 of Louis MacNeice's *Autumn Journal* – a splendid example of how politics, properly handled, can become the stuff of art:

*'And remembering that this crude and
so-called obsolete
Top-heavy tedious parliamentary system
Is our only real weapon to defeat
The legions' eagles and the lictors' axes.'*

MacNeice drove down to canvass for Lindsay, passing through Henley, Nettlebed, Shillingford and Dorchester, village pubs spilling golden puddles over the pavements as he zipped by. He concludes:

*'The nicest people in England have always
been the least
Apt to solidarity or alignment
But all of them must now align against
the beast
That prowls at the every door and barks
in every headline.'*

If one wants to re-enter the past via art perhaps one is better off reading *Autumn Journal* than watching *Munich – The Edge of War*. There is a docu-drama, *A Vote for Hitler* (1988), about the Oxford by-election, but the script writer Paul Bryers missed a trick in not finding a place for MacNeice.

BERNARD RICHARDS

NOTICE

The Editors of the *Oxford Magazine* regret that they cannot publish any material submitted to them anonymously. If the author requests publication on the basis that the author's name and university address be withheld from the readership, the Editors will consider the reasons given and in their discretion may publish on that basis; otherwise the material will be returned to the author.

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